

## BOOK REVIEW

CHET VAN DUZER. 2004. **Floating Islands: A global bibliography with an Edition and Translation of G. C. Munz's *Exercitacio academica de insulis natantibus* (1711)**. (ISBN 0-9755424-0-0, hbk.). Cantor Press, Los Altos Hills, California 94024, U.S.A. (**Orders:** [www.cantorpress.com](http://www.cantorpress.com)). \$44.95, 400 pp., illustrated, 6 1/8" × 9".

To an average versed and educated reader the word floating island evokes association to Jules Verne and Jonathan Swift, to the description of explorations of swamps along the upper course of the Nile River and to the floating gardens of the Titicaca Lake. These do not seem entirely concrete objects existing in the everyday life. This is the case in most countries without such islands. *Floating Islands* is an extensive and exciting annotated review of 2500 years of publications on floating islands, covering all possible items from floating bogs to pumice islands and from bird nest rafts to floating airports.

Van Duzer's book consists of two main parts. The first (33 pp.) is a reprint of the full Latin text and English translation of Georgius Christophorus Munz's rare 1711 *Exercitatio academica de Insulis natantibus*. Thus the basic work on the topic is easily accessible to the reader, both in its original form as well as its translation. Comprehensive and clear notes by Van Duzer follow (pp. 35–67) the Munz's description. The second part of the book is Global Bibliography on Floating Islands. On 280 pages there are gathered more than 1800 references of books and articles in twenty languages treating this subject. The entries are annotated and cross-referenced, and there are both thematic and geographic indices. All aspects of floating islands are addressed, including the formation of floating islands, the causes of their buoyancy, their role in the ecology of lakes and wetlands, their flora and fauna, their role in the dispersal of plants and animals, and methods for controlling and managing them. Works are also cited on artificial floating islands used for agriculture, human habitation, wildlife habitat, and improvement of water quality; and floating islands in literature, myth, and legend. The book includes the text and an English translation, with detailed notes, of G.C. Munz's rare 1711 thesis on floating islands, *Exercitatio academica de insulis natantibus*, as well as photographs of several floating islands.

Van Duzer's book is not only a complete (or one of the most) bibliography on floating islands, but also an indispensable source of literature for everyone wishing to know different aspects of floating islands. *Floating Islands* succeeds in condensing a large body of historical observation and thought; in addition, it contains summaries of the recent research on floating wetlands. Essentially every feature of floating islands is examined—their formation, causes of their buoyancy, dominant flora and fauna, and their interactions with the wetland, lake, and river habitats with which they are associated. The comprehensive coverage extends to artificial floating islands, to their uses, including human habitation, and into classical literature and mythology.

Van Duzer has not only provided a masterful treatment of the subject but has also provided an excellent bibliography. *Floating Islands* should serve as a basis for great scholarship for years to come. Recommended for all academic, botanical, herbarium, and taxonomic libraries. Larger public libraries would be well advised to include it in their collection.—Gary Jennings, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4068, U.S.A.